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**Duncan Signs Bills to Create Consumer Protection Office
And Minority Business Affairs Manager**

Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan today presided over a signing ceremony for two bills recently approved by the Montgomery County Council. Bill 24-05 creates a Minority Business Affairs Manager in the Department of Economic Development. Bill 25-05 creates the Office of Consumer Protection.

The consumer protection legislation, introduced in July, was spearheaded by Council President Tom Perez and creates the Office of Consumer Protection as a principal office in the Executive Branch of County government. The bill – which takes effect in January 2006 – transfers the division of Consumer Affairs from the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, where it currently is located. The new office will be a stand alone department under the direction of a merit system director.

“We already have an outstanding Consumer Affairs office, and this legislation will make it stronger and give it greater prominence,” said Duncan. “Our commitment to protecting the rights of consumers is second to none, and this legislation is an important step to further protect consumers from unfair and deceptive trade practices.”

“As an independent office, the Office of Consumer Protection is now better equipped to address the public’s growing consumer fraud concerns,” said Council President Tom Perez. “As a local government, we need to be prepared to protect consumers, and this office is now in a better position to do so.”

“Recognized as one of the best consumer affairs offices in the nation, the Montgomery County Consumer Protection office is a shining example of local government at its best. By establishing an independent office of consumer affairs, Doug Duncan and the County Council, are demonstrating their true concern for the consumers of Montgomery County,” Jack Gillis, Director of Public Affairs, Consumer Federation of America.

Bill 24-05 was introduced by the Council at the request of the County Executive and establishes a Minority Affairs Business Manager in the Department of Economic

Development. The manager will serve as an advocate for minority businesses in the County and will focus on fostering partnerships, development and contracting opportunities for minority-owned businesses. The legislation is effective immediately.

“Our goal is to expand the entire economy and in doing so, ensuring that the opportunities and benefits will be shared by companies of every size, with owners of every background, gender and ethnicity,” said Duncan. “Our new Minority Affairs Business Manager will play a vital role as we strive to reach our goal.”

“We are excited about the creation of the new Minority Business Affairs Manager position in the Department of Economic Development,” said African American Chamber of Commerce President Janice Freman. “This position will meet the unique needs of the minority business community and we applaud the County Executive for this creative initiative.”

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